2008-00263/

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Alberta

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2006FOR0048-000679
May 26, 2006

Ministry of Forests and Range
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

B.C., ALBERTA WORK TOGETHER TO LIMIT BEETLE SPREAD

VICTORIA – British Columbia and Alberta have surveyed and mapped 4.1 million hectares of forests and removed more than 45,000 infested trees this winter in a joint effort to prevent the mountain pine beetle from spreading across the B.C.-Alberta border.

"This work is part of a $17-million program aimed at limiting the beetle's spread – a key priority in our Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan," said B.C. Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman. "We destroyed tens of thousands of infested trees in the border zone before the beetles could fly east later this spring or summer."

About 8.7 million hectares of B.C. forest – an area larger than New Brunswick – were infested by the pine beetle last year. By the time the infestation has run its course, it's expected to kill as much as 80 per cent of the lodgepole pine in B.C. Although the beetle has primarily attacked B.C.'s lodgepole pine, scientists believe that Alberta's jack pine forests could also be at risk.

"The mountain pine beetle poses the same kind of threat to forests in Alberta as it does to forests in British Columbia," said Alberta Sustainable Resource Development Minister David Coutts. "Along the eastern slopes, there are more than two million hectares of pine forests at risk, worth an estimated $23 billion. We're continuing to work together and share costs with our western neighbour to help prevent damage to susceptible forests on both sides of the Rockies."

Last year, British Columbia and Alberta signed a five-year memorandum of understanding for an aggressive spread control program in the Rocky Mountain, Columbia, Headwaters and Peace forest districts along the B.C.-Alberta border.

The work involves surveying forests from both the air and the ground to identify infested trees. Trees under attack by the beetle are cut down and burned.

British Columbia is contributing $13.7 million to the spread control program while Alberta is investing $3.7 million. Of that amount, $1.7 million comes from the Alberta forest industry.

For more information about the spread control program in the Peace, Rocky Mountain, Headwaters, and Columbia forest districts, visit www.gov.bc.ca/pinebeetle online.

-30-

Media contact:
Max Cleeveley
Communications Director
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-8486

Michel Proulx
Communications
Sustainable Resource Development
780 427-8636
780 238-0422

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.